Lafayette Historical Society
P.O. Box 133
Lafayette, CA 94549

Bulletin, Vol. VIII No. 7 February, 1980
President: George Wasson

Coming Events

Our next general membership meeting will be on Tuesday, March 4, at 8 PM in the Lafayette School auditorium. A program on Indians of the year 1000 in the Rossmoor area will be presented featuring a collection of artifacts found at the site and collected by Fern Powell Davis and her associates from Rossmoor. There will also be a film "Ishi In Two Worlds". Ishi was the survivor of early Indian culture in Northern California.

This program should be of interest to everyone intrigued with the early history of this area and particularly to school children who may have assignments pertaining to the original Indians of the area. As usual, everyone is welcome and we encourage our members to extend an invitation to their friends and neighbors. Bring your children. The meeting should be ended early so as not to interfere with the next day's school schedule.

Pot Luck Date and Program

The annual Pot Luck will be on Tuesday, April 15 at the Veteran's Memorial Hall. The chairman of the evening will be contacting you to solicit your participation in the food and other arrangements.

The entertainment will be the Moraga Chamber Singers, a singing group mostly from Campalindo High School. These singers have been invited by the British Broadcasting System to appear in London and to present their choral program for broadcast. They are the only high school group that has been invited to perform in this London program. We understand that the invitation was extended because of the high quality of their performance.

Needless to say, they are trying to raise funds for their trip. This society will support that effort and we suggest you may want to hear them and support them.

Historical Land Mark Plaque

On November 11, 1979 the Lafayette Historical Society dedicated a plaque commemorating the 125th anniversary of the first known burial at the Lafayette Cemetery.

In addition to the members of this Society that were present, the special participants included Jack Murray, Commander of the

Lafayette American Legion Post 517, Primo Facchini and Dorothy Mutnick, Directors of the Lafayette-Alamo Cemetery District, Brother Dennis of St. Mary's College and a number of other Lafayette residents.

Dorothy Mutnick, Chairman and Director of the Cemetery District, was the featured speaker. Here are some of the highlights of Dorothy's comments. The full text of her talk is available in your Society's files. (Editing by George Wasson).

The road in front of the cemetery was the route for redwood lumbering between Canyon and Martinez. James Gorham and his son Medford Gorham each "took up" 160 acres hoping it would be public land. Medford Gorham later married Elam Brown's step-daughter. Later the Hodges-David, Samuel and Benjamin, all "took up" 160 acres in the area.

When one of the Hodges' daughters died, they had to decide where to bury her. That must have been one of the first deaths in the area and probably her father, David, said, "Let's put her overthere on that hillside".

A son of Isaac Hunsaker, Joseph Daniel Hunsaker, died some time before 1860, a daughter, Margaret Ellen Hunsaker, was buried in 1858, and Walter George Renwick from the Glenside area, died in 1858 and was buried in the Lafayette Cemetery area. Before 1874, the date that has been used for establishment of the cemetery, there must have been 15 to 20 of the area's residents buried in the cemetery.

In 1868 the living residents found that the land they farmed and lived on and had called their own, was not theirs. It had been put into the Manuela Valencia Briones Rancho and Manuela Rancho had sold everything to innumerable people.

Several of the early residents bought parcels of the land they had farmed including Medford Gorham, who bought 22-1/2 acres (for $338) which included 12 feet of the cemetery. The rest of the cemetery was in the land Hodges claimed. In 1874, two days after Medford bought the 22-1/2 acres, he sold four acres to the Cemetery Association for $100. That is the origin of the 1874 date for establishment of the Lafayette Cemetery.

Dorothy does not believe there are Civil War veterans buried in the cemetery, there seemed not to be Civil War people in the Lafayette area at all; however, many of the pioneers of the area are buried here.

The plaque mounted on the Easterly stone gate post at the cemetery reads as follows:

"Many pioneers from Lafayette and surrounding towns have been buried here since the early 1850's. The cemetery was officially established in 1874 as the Cemetery Corporation of La Fayette with Elam Brown as chairman. We dedicate this plaque on the 125th anniversary of the first recorded burial." Lafayette Historical Society 1979.

Historical Society Board Members and Officers

The nominating committee is at work. A number of vacancies exist and a new slate of officers will be nominated. If you wish to serve, please call George Wasson (284-4603); if you are asked to serve, please accept.

Recent Acquisitions

The Lafayette Lions Club has been instrumental in giving your society a copy of the 1941 Temporary Telephone Directory for Lafayette. The directory belonged to Carl Miller of Orinda. It's an interesting book; 5 pages of 6"x9" listings, 2 pages of instructions. Looks like less than 600 listings, but some familiar names. No Yellow Pages.

We also were given a photograph taken at "The Curve" restaurant. It is the Charter Night banquet of the Lions Club on July 14, 1939. Some unnamed people in the picture ..... can anyone assist?

Second Printing - Lafayette History

We are going to press again. The editors are working on revisions. Let us know of any changes you think are needed. The new edition should be ready by Fall, 1980. The first edition is completely sold out. This history makes a wonderful gift to anyone interested in the beginnings of Lafayette.

Another Cemetery Project

The Martinez Cemetery Committee, an official Martinez City committee, has been formed to help restore grave sites of early pioneers in the area. There was an article in the Contra Costa Times on February 7, 1980 about their activities.

Elam Brown, the founder of Lafayette, is buried in the Martinez Cemetery and your directors have agreed that the Lafayette Historical Society will assume responsibility for "clean-up" at that grave site.

Anyone interested in adopting a grave or assisting in restoring a pioneer's grave at the Martinez Cemetery, should contact the Martinez Cemetery Committee at Martinez City Hall, 525 Henrietta Street, Martinez, California 94553.

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